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ABSTRACT

To investigate differences between special education (SE) and normal subjects with respect to degree of alienation, 102 males and 54 female educable mentally retarded adolescents were compared to their normal peers on responses made to an 87-item opinion questionnaire. Of the seven measures of alienation contained in the questionnaire, the SE subjects showed a greater degree of alienation on six of the seven factors. Also, on four of the alienation scales male subjects exhibited significantly more alienation than females. Normal males also exhibited more alienation than their counterparts on two factors, while no differences were found between the special education groups. (Author/KW)

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COMPARISON OF ALIENATION, ACHIEVEMENT MOTIVATION, AND ATTITUDES TOWARD SCHOOL IN SPECIAL EDUCATION AND NORMAL SUBJECTS

by
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ERRATUM

The cover title, "Comparison of Alienation, Achievement Motivation, and Attitudes Toward School in Special Education and Normal Subjects", is in error due to a printer's error.

The title as it appears on the introduction page is the correct title of the manuscript.

A COMPARISON OF DEGREE OF ALIENATION IN SPECIAL EDUCATION AND NORMAL SUBJECTS[1]

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Abstract

A special education group consisting of 102 males and 54 females was compared to a normal group consisting of 42 males and 46 females on responses made to an 87-item opinionnaire containing 7 measures of alienation. As expected, the results indicated that special education subjects manifested greater degrees of alienation on six of the seven factors. On the remaining factor normals were significantly more alienated. In addition, differences were found between males and females on four of the alienation scales with male subjects exhibiting significantly more alienation than females. Normal males also exhibited more alienation than their female counterparts on two of the factors while no differences were found between the special education groups.

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[1]Grateful acknowledgement is given to J. Leatherman and his staff at the Manatee County Vocational and Technical Education Center for making subjects available and cooperating during testing; and Dr. Bernard Spilka, Department of Psychology, University of Denver, for making his scales available for the present research.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the present research was to investigate differences between special education and normal subjects with respect to degree of alienation. Spilka (1967) points out that the concept of alienation refers to the nature of an individual's relationship to the environment, and this in turn has implications for the manner in which the individual responds to himself. People must make constant adjustments to the things and events in their milieu: i. e., family, friends, occupation, organizations, etc. When these relationships between the person and the environment become discordant alienation develops. The social contexts in which the alienated person must function are characteristically disagreeable, restrictive, hostile, chaotic, and incomprehensible.

The alienated individual does not believe that he is an active participant in society. Under these conditions it becomes extremely doubtful that the alienated person has the ability to establish a positive identity or to realize his potential because of his inadequate relationship with his environment (Rubins, 1961; Vollmerausen, 1961; Horney, 1964). Hence, the most salient feature of alienation becomes the estrangement of the person from the world in which he lives. Underlying the alienated orientation may be feelings of powerlessness, aloneness, normlessness, meaninglessness, and so on that lead to estrangement from self. Self estrangement and estrangement from the environment may operate in circular fashion, so that one reinforces the other (Fromm, 1955; 1961; Seeman, 1959; Bell, 1960; Nesbit, 1962).

That retarded children frequently face situations in their environments that lead to the type of estrangement discussed above seems entirely plausible. Evidence exists that the mere labeling of an individual as being retarded may have adverse effects on the individual's ability to establish meaningful relationships with others. Dexter (1956, 1958) has commented that the role expectations that society has created for the mentally retarded individual results in his being treated with difference. Guskin (1963) has implied that the distortive properties of the defective sterotype may influence the manner in which the retardate is perceived and responded to by other people in his milieu.

Related to the negative role expectations and sterotypes discussed above an added possible source of alienation may stem from the dissonant relationships frequently encountered in the family unit. The studies of Fredericks (1957) and Worchel and Worchel (1961) suggest that parents tend to judge their retarded children less favorably than normal siblings as measured by parent attitude scales. In addition, a great deal of comment has been directed towards the frequent disruption encountered in families containing retarded members. The research of Schonell and Watts (1956), Holt (1958), and Farber (1959, 1960) suggests that many aspects of the daily life of families containing retarded children become significantly disrupted.

In summary, the above studies provide evidence that retarded individuals frequently live in environments that can be characterized as having a high degree of disruption and disorganization. These findings

coupled with the fact that mentally retarded children experience failure and rejection in the school setting leads to the conclusion that mentally retarded children can be considered prime candidates for the development of alienation.

In terms of the above stated rationale the present research was an attempt to analyze specifically the degree of alienation manifested by educable mentally retarded adolescents in special education classes as compared to their normal peers. It was hypothesized that adolescents in special education classes would manifest a greater degree of alienation than would their normal counterparts due to the adverse effects that they encounter in their daily lives.

METHOD

Subjects

A total of 244 subjects were selected for the present research from the student populations enrolled in the special education and regular components of the Manatee County Vocational Education Program in Bradenton, Florida. The special education sample consisted of 102 male and 54 female subjects with respective mean ages and IQs of 15.86 years and 78.04 for the males, and 15.85 years and 74.81 for the females. The normal sample was composed of 42 males and 46 females with respective mean ages and IQs of 15.92 years and 102.64 for the males, and 16.15 years and 103.62 for the female subjects.

Measures

The alienation measure used in the present study was developed by

Spilka (1970) and consists of seven factors measuring different dimensions of alienation. A narrative of each of seven factors may be given as follows:

> Factor I: Powerlessness: This factor appears to stress the complexity of problems, the profusion and confusion of ideas that lead to self-estrangement and isolation. In general one is manipulated by others, overwhelmed by his circumstances and therefore might as well just go along with what is required because it is useless to fight.
>
> Sample Item: Trying to figure out how to get ahead in life is just too hard.

> Factor II: A Conformist, Protestant Ethic vs. an Anti-Social Hopelessness.
>
> A conformist orientation which signifies an anti-alienative mode of adjustment. The themes of the Protestant Ethic prevail. Work is of prime importance, ability counts, school is useful, life is worthwhile, and one's family is reliably close by. This is a bipolar factor, the negative end focusing on a hopeless future and the baseness of human nature.
>
> Sample Item: Most of the time I feel that the work I'm doing is important and useful.

> Factor III: Meaninglessness: There is a reliance on luck and chance for progress with the idea that rules don't really hold so that meaningfulness is self-determined. Still one finds meaninglessness identified with a strong element of hopelessness.
>
> Sample Item: With so many different religions around, one doesn't really know which to believe.

> Factor IV: Hopeful Friendliness: An anti-alienative factor which counters the hopelessness of social isolation. An optimistic future is posited with understanding among peoples.
>
> Sample Item: The world in which we live is really a friendly place.

Factor V: Psychosocial Isolation: Separateness physical and mental, is stressed. Aloneness is perceived as the respondent's mode of existence.
Sample Item: I often feel people around here are not too friendly.

Factor VI: Normlessness: Here we find approval for breaking the rules of society, but implicit are ideas of conformity to unwritten rules, mostly of personal denotation. Getting ahead counts and a superficial conformity for appearance sake is acceptable.
Sample Item: Sometimes it's all right to get around the law if you don't actually break it.

Factor VII: Theoretical General Alienation (uses all items): These items derive from the theoretical notions of Dean, Seeman, and many others. They were designed to assess the following characteristics: Powerlessness, Normlessness, Psychosocial Isolation, Self-Estrangement, Hopelessness, Meaninglessness and alienation from institutional settings.

Spilka (1970) reports the following reliabilities for each of the alienation factors: Factor I, R= .809; Factor II, R= .646; Factor III, R= .702; Factor IV, R= .800; Factor V, R= .810; Factor VI, R= .735; and Factor VII, R= .885.

Procedure

An opinionnaire consisting of 87 items for the factors discussed above was administered to each subject in his normal classroom setting. The subjects' task was to indicate whether they strongly agreed, slightly agreed, slightly disagreed, or strongly disagreed with each item by circling their choice on the opinionnaire next to each statement. Each subject was given as much time as necessary so that he could complete all of the items.

In order to guarantee the validity of the subjects' responses, the

examiners in each classroom were instructed to spend as much time as required to explain the content of a given item to a given subject. This procedure was used because of the insufficient reading ability frequently encountered in mentally retarded children. In several cases it was necessary to remove subjects from the sample because of their lack of comprehension of the task.

RESULTS

Upon completion of the administration of the alienation measure, scores for each factor of this instrument were tabulated for each subject. The scores were then analyzed by means of a 2 x 2 factorial analysis of variance for unequal cell frequencies using the harmonic mean procedures given in Winer (1962). Significant differences were found on all seven of the factors comprising the alienation measure. On six of the factors; I: Powerlessness; II: Protestant Ethic; III: Meaninglessness; V: Psychosocial Isolation; VI: Normlessness; VII: Theoretical General Alienation significant main effects were found for class indicating that subjects in special education classes were more alienated than their normal counterparts (respective F's for 1,240 df were 12.97, 37.86, 11.36, 10.01, and 9.65; $\underline{P} < .01$ for Factors I, III, V, VI, and VII; $F = 4.85$, $\underline{P} < .05$ for Factor II).

In contrast the analysis of Factor IV: Hopeful Friendliness revealed that special education subjects were significantly less alienated as measured by this factor than were subjects in normal classes. The F for

1,240 df = 11.49; $\underline{P} < .01$.

In addition to the class differences noted above significant main effects for sex were noted for Factors II: Protestant Ethic; III: Meaninglessness; VI: Normlessness; and VII: Theoretical General Alienation. The respective F's for 1,240 df were 9.95, 16.21, 21.19 and 7.60; $\underline{P} < .01$. On all four of these factors males exhibited more alienation than females.

Of the seven factors analyzed only two yielded significant interactions between class and sex. The first significant interaction was found on Factor III: Meaninglessness as indicated by F = 8.76 for 1,240 df; $\underline{P} < .01$. Analysis of Figure I indicated that normal males were significantly more alienated than their normal female counterparts (respective means = 21.26 and 24.17; t = 4.45, $\underline{P} < .01$). Furthermore, analysis of the simple effects revealed that special education males were significantly more alienated than normal males (respective means = 19.48 and 21.26; t = 2.36, $\underline{P} < .01$), and that special education females were significantly more alienated than normal females (respective means = 20.07 and 25.17; t = 6.18, $\underline{P} < .01$). No significant differences were noted between special education males and females.

The second factor that yielded a significant interaction was Factor VI: Normlessness (F = 12.27 for 1,240 df; $\underline{P} < .01$). As noted in Figure 2 the normal males were significantly more alienated than the normal females (means = 15.21 and 18.41; t = 4.18, $\underline{P} < .01$). Significant differences were also noted between special education and normal females

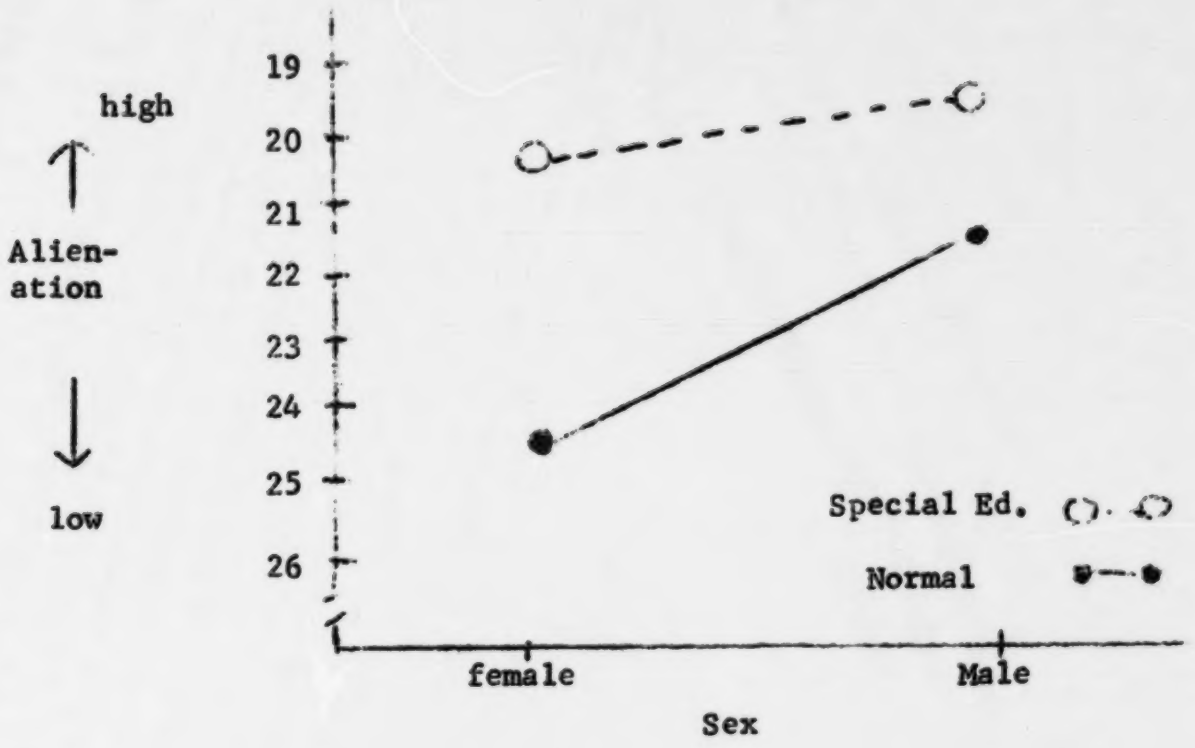

Figure 1. Class x sex interaction for Alienation Factor III: Meaninglessness.

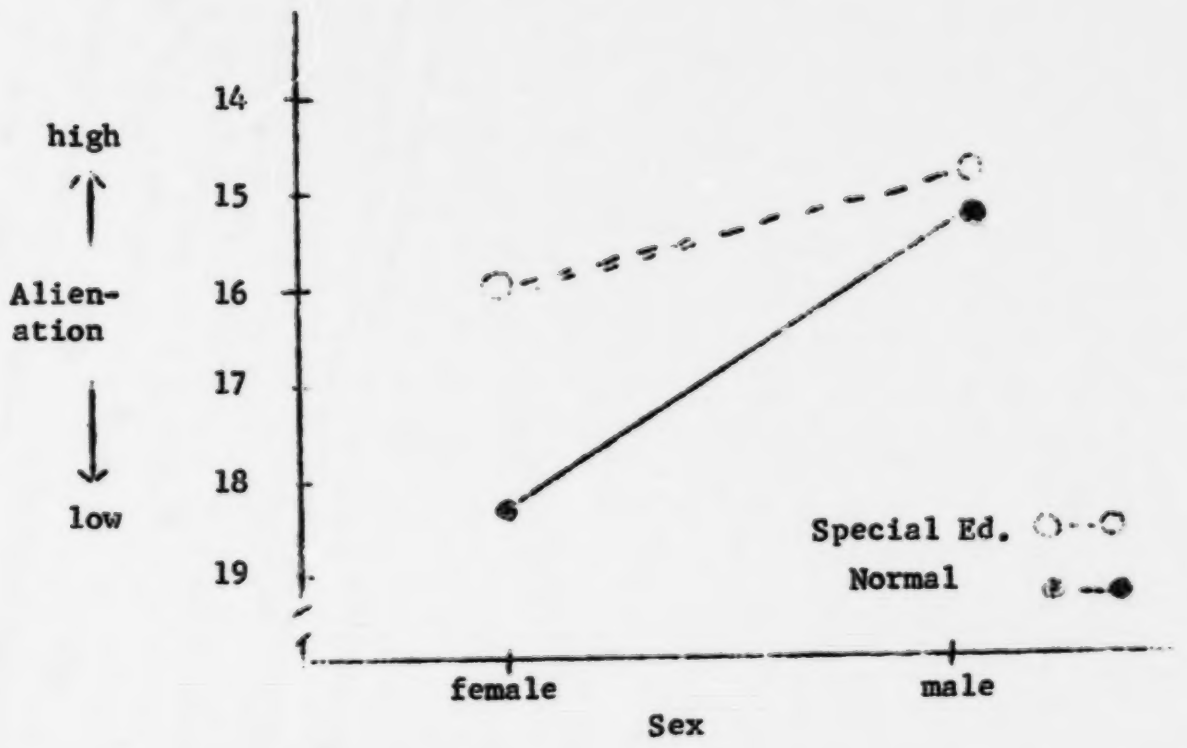

Figure 2. Class x sex interaction for Alienation Factor VI: Normlessness.

(means = 15.91 and 18.41; t = 3.47, P .01). However, unlike the results found on Factor III no differences were found between the special education and normal males. Similarly, there was no significant difference between males and females in special education classes.

DISCUSSION

As noted in the previous section significant differences were found on each of the seven factors comprising the alienation measure. With respect to specific factor content the following interpretations can be made. On Factor I: Powerlessness, the special education subjects manifested a greater degree of self-estrangement stemming from their perceived inability to cope with the complex problems of life. Added to the self-estrangement were feelings of being manipulated by others so that there was little use in trying to control their own destinies.

Similarly, on Factor II: a Conformist, Protestant Ethic vs. an Anti-Social Hopelessness, special education subjects tended to view life in a more negative manner than normal students. Special education subjects were more prone to reject the validity of the "doctrine of good work" and manifest feelings that there was little hope for the future. Sex differences were also noted on Factor II indicating that males showed a significantly greater tendency to depreciate the value of hard work. In addition, males expressed greater degrees of doubt about their future than was the case for females.

Factor III: Meaninglessness, must be discussed in terms of the significant class by sex interaction. The important finding was that

normal males were significantly more alienated than normal females while no such differences existed for the special education groups. In terms of the specific content the normal boys showed a greater propensity, when compared with their female counterparts, to believe that progress was determined by luck, and that the rules established by society for getting ahead do not really hold. Furthermore, while no differences existed between the male and female special education groups, both of these groups showed significantly more alienation than the respective normal groups to which they were being compared.

One of the most interesting findings reported above related to the reversal found on Factor IV: Hopeful Friendliness. As noted earlier this was the only factor on which the normal subjects exhibited a greater degree of alienation than the special education students. The normals showed a tendency to reject the idea that the problems facing the world could be solved through understanding among people. In contrast, the special education subjects showed a greater degree of faith in man's ability to solve his problems through cooperation with his fellow human beings.

On Factor V: Psychosocial Isolation, the special education subjects perceived their existence as being characterized by aloneness to a greater extent than the normals. The fifth factor stresses physical and mental separation from other individuals. This finding takes on added interest in that even though the retarded subjects felt isolated from other people as measured by Factor V, they still hold other people in

favorable regard as indicated by the results for the fourth factor.

The findings for Factor VI: Normlessness were remarkably similar to those reported for Factor III. Normal males exhibited significantly more alienation manifested in terms of accepting the position that the accepted rules of society should be discarded in order to get ahead when compared to their normal female peers. No such differences were found between the male and female special education subjects. Unlike the results for Factor III on the sixth factor only the female special education subjects were more alienated than their normal counterparts while no such differences existed between the male groups.

Special education vs. normal differences were also found on Factor VII: Theoretical General Alienation. This scale was designed to measure the general characteristics of alienation derived from the theoretical notions of Dean (1961), Seeman (1959), and other workers in the field. The seventh factor consists of items covering many of the specific dimensions measured by the other alienation scales such as Powerlessness, Self-Estrangement, Hopelessness, and so forth. Consistent with the findings discussed above the retardates were more alienated than normals in terms of this composite measure of alienation. In addition, the trend for sex differences was continued on this factor with male subjects showing significantly more alienation than females.

With the exception of the results for the fourth factor, the hypothesis that adolescents in special education classes would manifest a greater degree of alienation than would their normal counterparts due to

the adverse effects that they encounter in their daily lives, was generally supported by the findings of the present study. Underlying the hypothesis was the assumption that the prejudicial roles and role expectations to which mentally retarded individuals are subjected to in our society relate directly to the emergence of a constellation of negative attitudes and values about the basic institutions of our society by such individuals.

In light of the results found for Factor IV: Hopeful Friendliness several alternative explanations seem plausible. First, that special education subjects because of their strong personal attachments fostered by a greater dependency on others have developed stronger beliefs about the essential goodness of man than their normal peers. These beliefs may be further reinforced in that frequently retarded children receive an inordinate amount of support, protection, and nurturence by their parents. Another explanation centers on the possibility that the special education subjects because of their lower level of intellectual functioning show an inability to perceive the basic relationship between man and the institutions that he creates and must function in. This would account for the findings in the present study where the special education subjects manifested a high degree of alienation on those factors measuring divorce from society and institutions, while at the same time showing a positive orientation in terms of attitudes and values about people.

The male-female differences noted above can be viewed in terms of those factors contributing to sex differences in our society as a whole. The content of the factors on which differences were found between males

and females can be considered to represent rebellion against a number of the basic values in the American Culture. It may be argued that the rebellion found in the male subjects' responses to the alienation scales reflects the higher degree of rebellion manifested by male adolescents in general in our society, and that such general differences result from differential rearing practices and role expectations established for males and females.

With respect to the class by sex interactions noted on Factors III and VI, the following explanation can be made. As reported above the important finding related significant differences between the male and female normals while no differences existed between the special education groups. The difference found between the normal groups can be explained using the same rationale employed above in the discussion of sex differences. Namely, that the results can be accounted for by the differential rearing practices and expectations found for males and females in our society. However, the lack of differences between male and female retarded subjects suggests the possibility that strong antecedent conditions may be operating to suppress sex differences with respect to these two groups. An example of one such factor relates to the labeling of an individual as being retarded. It could be that the process of labeling results in the establishment of a unique set of responses by significant others towards the retardate that results in discriminations being made on the basis of the retarded-normal dichotomy rather than the male-female differentiation with little regard for the sex of the individual.

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